

The blood-red glow of a slanting sun bathed the towers of New York's serrated skyline, then dropped into a molten sea beyond the winter horizon. Friday, the last day of Jupiter, the thirteenth month of the earth's new calendar, had drawn to a close. In a few hours the year of 1999 would end—at midnight, to be exact.

Far below the towers stretched well lighted canyons teeming with humanity. At an upper level where once the elevated trains had roared and rumbled in an antiquated period long past, an orderly mass of workers and shoppers was borne at an incredible speed from lower Manhattan to towering apartments that stretched northward to Peekskill. The northbound traffic was heaviest at this hour and the moving sidewalk bands were jammed to their capacity.

Street cars, now obsolete, had vanished from the streets under the new order of things as had also passenger cars, taxis and trucks. Speed predominated. Noise had practically been eliminated.

Except for the gentle throb of giant motors far underground, the city was cloaked in silence.

At regular intervals along the four-speed moving bands that formed the transportation of the great metropolis, huge circular shafts of steel mounted upward beyond the roofs of the tallest buildings. Within these shafts, swift elevators carried passengers who lived in the outlying districts to the level of the station platforms of the interstate operating transport planes.

Close to the entrance of one of the steel shafts stood a young man a little above medium height. His deep-sunken eyes were those of a dreamer, a searcher. They were the eyes of a man who had seen strange and startling things. At present they were staring into the pulsing wave of humanity flowing northward on the endless steel bands beyond the platform.

Quite suddenly they lighted with pleasure as a man and a girl detached themselves from the swift moving river of people and hurried to the spot where he stood.

"Think we were never coming?" Karl Danzig's eyes were much like those of Aaron Carruthers. Just now they sparkled with suppressed excitement.

Aaron Carruthers smiled in turn. "No, Karl. Any man but you. I couldn't imagine you being late." He turned his attention to the slim, dark haired girl. "Nanette," he murmured, extending his hand, "I didn't think you'd come."

Dazzling white teeth caught the glow of the blue-white incandescents along the platform, and became under the bow of her red lips a string of priceless pearls.

"I had to come, Aaron. Karl has done nothing but talk of your amazing discovery. The experiment fairly frightens me at times especially when I recall the sad fate of your friend, the missing Professor Dahlgren. I wish you boys would give up the idea—"

"Nan, be still," broke in Karl, with brotherly rudeness. Turning to Carruthers. "Everything all ready, Aaron?" he asked.

Carruthers nodded. "As far as humanly possible. The element of error is always present. I've checked and re-checked my calculations. I've augmented the vacuum tubes by installing three super-dimensional inverse power tubes." He clasped the girl's arm. "The street is no place to talk. Let's go to the laboratory."

They crossed the moving bands by an overhead bridge and cut down a narrow canyon to the entrance of a crosstown series of bands. They stepped onto the first band. The speed was moderate. From there they moved over to the second. Carruthers was in a hurry. He guided the girl and her brother across the third to the fourth band of moving steel.

Buildings slid past them like wraiths in the electric light. They felt no winter chill, for the streets and platforms were heated by a constant flow of warm air from slots ingeniously arranged in the band of swift moving metal upon which they stood. Within a few minutes they had arrived at their destination. Quickly they reversed their path across the moving bands until they reached the disembarking platform. A short

distance from the station they came to the entrance of a huge tower building.

Carruthers nodded to the doorman and they were admitted into a marble hallway. A silent, unattended lift bore them swiftly to the seventy-fifth floor. Down a deep carpeted hallway they moved. Carruthers touched his door. It opened. He stood to one side as the other two entered.

Nanette cried with delight at the luxurious splendor of the place. "Why, Aaron, I never dreamed the night view could be quite so delightful! I do believe that if the horrid government had not taken down that little Statue of Liberty and substituted the Shaft Triumph in its place, that I could easily see her fingers clasping the torch she was reputed to hold.

"Progress, dear girl," shrugged Carruthers, holding out his hands for her cape. "By the way, have you folks eaten?"

"Not in a week," said Karl.

"Von Sternberger's food tablets," informed the girl.

Carruthers nodded. His deep-set eyes regarded them appraisingly. "Any ill effects?"

"None whatever," spoke Danzig. "Neither of us have the slightest craving for food."

"Good. Did you bring any with you?"

"A whole carton."

"Then I guess we're already to make the experiment. You're sure. Nanette, that you're not afraid of...."

"Don't be silly, Aaron. I haven't grown up with Karl for nothing. He's always used me for the disagreeable end of his crazy experiments. And besides," she smiled on both men. "I have a woman's curiosity for the unknown."

"Very well," said Carruthers gravely. From his waistcoat pocket he took a ring of keys and inserted one of them into the lock of an immense steel door.

"Our laboratory," he announced, swinging the door wide.

Nanette's eyes opened wide at the paneled whiteness of the room. Most of the far side was taken up with electrical machines, dynamos, generators and glass enclosed motors of an advanced type. Overhead, concealed lights made the room as light as day. A heavy glass railing shielded a square spot in the exact center of the room.

"What's that for?" asked the girl.

Danzig and Carruthers both regarded it with troubled eyes. It was Carruthers who spoke.

"That railing marks the spot where Professor Dahlgren stood when the rays of our atomic machine struck him."

"You mean," breathed the girl, "that he never moved from that spot after the rays touched his body? What happened?"

Karl had already divested himself of his coat and was checking the copper cables leading into a strange machine.

"It was rather curious," remarked Carruthers. "The moment the ray touched him his body began to dwindle. But evidently he suffered no pain. As a matter of fact his mind remained quite clear."

"How did you know?"

"As he dwindled in size," continued Carruthers, "he shouted warningly that the rays had become confused and for us to cut the switch. But the warning came a fraction of a second too late. Even as my fingers opened the contact, his body dwindled to a mere speck and disappeared entirely from sight."

Nanette gazed with staring eyes at the ill-fated spot. Her face had grown steadily paler. "Oh, Aaron! It's awful! What do you suppose happened?"

Carruthers eyes glowed strangely. "I didn't exactly know at the time, Nanette. I'm not sure that I know



even now. But I've got a theory and Karl has helped me to build a second machine to flash a restoring ray on the square spot. What will take place I cannot even conjecture."

"Let's get on with the experiment," interrupted Karl. "Nanette can be shown later what she is to do."

Carruthers turned to Danzig. "All right. Karl. Draw up a chair to your machine. And you, Nanette, sit close to this switch. It's off now. To turn it on, simply push it forward until the copper plates slide into each other. To turn the current off, you pull sharply out. However, we aren't quite ready."

He shifted his position until he stood before a third machine slightly smaller than the other two. His fingers clicked a switch. The dial of the instrument glowed whitely.

"It's important," continued Carruthers, "that we first locate our interference. We have here, Nanette, a common television receiving apparatus capable of

picking up news and pictures from any corner of the globe. Ready, Karl?"

Danzig clicked on the switch before his own machine and turned one of the many dials mounted on the panel in front of him. A faint hum filled the room as the generator settled to its task.

Carruthers reached up and dimmed the overhead lights. A screen of what looked like frosted glass set in the wall glowed luminously. The interior of a famous broadcasting studio became mirrored in the glass screen. Into it stepped the master of ceremonies. He spoke briefly of the New Year's activities that would soon take place when the twenty-eighth day of Jupiter ended at midnight.

"Boston," said Carruthers. "Too near."

"Try Frisco," suggested Karl. "The tubes ought to be sufficiently heated by this time."

The dial whirled beneath Carruthers slender fingers. The pictures framed in the frosted panel faded.

Another took its place. San Francisco—an afternoon concert. Carruthers saw and listened for a moment, then moved thousands of miles out to sea.

Shanghai drifted into the panel, announcing in sing-song accents the weather reports. Following this came reports of various uprisings along the Manchurian border.

While yet the three listeners and watchers bent their heads toward the panel in the wall, a strange thing occurred. The silver frostiness of the screen became violently agitated with what looked like tiny sparks darting in and about each other like miniature solar systems. Shanghai faded from the picture. All that remained visible now was the jumbled mass of needle-pointed sparks of luminosity.

"Careful," warned Carruthers. "Slow up the speed of your reflector, Karl. There, that's better. Watch the meter reading. I'm going to step up the power of the dimensional tubes. Steady!"

From an invisible reproducer came a sharp, metallic crackling like machine-gun bullets rattling on a tin roof. The sparks on the screen became violently agitated, pushing around in erratic circles and ellipses. They glowed constantly in shades of bright green through the blues into the deep violets of the color scale.

"What do you read?" asked Carruthers.

"Point seven six nine," answered Karl.

"Shift it back towards the blue, about two points lower on the scale."

Danzig twisted two dials at the same time with minute exactness. "Point seven six eleven," he intoned.

"Hold it," ordered Carruthers. "Blue should predominate." He turned his eyes on the dancing sparks on the screen. They glowed now a deep indigo blue. "Lock your dials against accidental turning. We're tuned to the vanishing point."

Danzig rose to his feet. "What will we use?"

Carruthers looked hastily around the room. "Most anything will do." His eyes rested on a glass test tube. Quickly he rose to his feet and removed it from the wall rack. Then bending over the glass railing that enclosed the mysterious square he placed it on the floor. He turned now to the girl.

"Quiet, now, Nanette, and don't under any condition leave the chair. The path of the ray should pass within two feet of you, having a wide margin of safety. All right, Karl. Set the dials of the inverse dimensional tubes at point seven six eleven, and switch the power to the Roentgen tube."

Through the dimly lighted laboratory came a spurt of bluish flame that twisted and squirmed with slow undulations around the cathode electrode.

"Fine," enthused Carruthers, "The cathode emanations coincide exactly with the interference chart. Watch your meter gauges, Karl, while I switch to the atomic ray."

His fingers closed over a switch. The indigo points of flame bathing the electrode gathered themselves into a ring and began to revolve around an invisible nucleus located near the electrode. Carruthers studied the revolving flame for a moment, then switched off the television machine. It was no longer needed.

Carefully, for the atomic ray was still a mysterious force to Carruthers, he opened a small door in the panel and drew out the focusing machine. It was shaped very much like a camera except that the lens protruded several inches beyond the machine proper.

With infinite patience he made the final adjustments and moved away from the front of the lens. "Ready?"

Danzig nodded and threw on the full power of the inverse dimensional tubes. A low clear hum filled the quiet room of the laboratory. From the lens of the focusing machine shot a pale, amber beam. It struck the glass test tube squarely in the center and glowed against its smooth sides.

Carruthers reached across his own machine and turned the final switch. The amber beam emanating from the lens increased in intensity. And as it increased it took on a deep violet color.

Nanette cried out in muffled alarm. But even as Vincent raised his voice to quiet her fears the test tube suddenly shrunk to nothingness and vanished into the ether.

"Aaron!" whispered the girl, awesomely. "It ... it's gone!"

Carruthers nodded. Beads of sweat stood out upon his forehead. Would the returning ray work? He had made the test tube follow the same route as that taken by Professor Dahlgren. Both were gone. He clicked off the switch and the beam faded.

With a deliberate calmness that in no way matched the inner tumult brought on by the experiment, he turned the dials of the machine he and Danzig had worked out together. A second switch clicked under his fingers. From the lense of the focusing machine

shot the reverse atomic beam. As it struck the center of the square it turned a bright vermilion. For several seconds it played upon empty space, then the miracle unfolded before their eyes.

Something like a glass sliver reflected the beam. It grew and enlarged under their startled eyes until it had achieved its former size, then the power that had brought it back switched itself off automatically.

Together both men examined the test tube. It appeared in no way harmed, nor did it feel either warm or cold from its trip through the elements.

"It works!" marveled Danzig. "Let's try it again with something larger."

"I've got a better idea," said Carruthers, rising to his feet. He crossed the laboratory and went to another part of his rooms. Presently he returned holding a small pink rat in his hands. The rodent was young, having been born only a week before. "Now we'll see what happens."



"Oh, it's torture to the poor thing," burst out Nanette.

"It won't hurt it," growled Karl. "Aaron knows what he's doing."

Carruthers placed the little rat in the center of the square. It lay there, very quiet and unblinking. Again the switches clicked as the contacts were closed.

Came once more the beam of amber colored light followed closely by the violet. The rat dwindled to the size of an insect, then disappeared into space. The three watchers held their breaths. Carruthers' hand trembled the least bit as he threw on the switch controlling the animal's return to the world.

A vermilion shaft of light pierced the semi-darkened rooms. The animal had been gone from sight not more than a minute. Abruptly something grayish white unfolded in the reflector's beam. It rapidly expanded under three pairs of bulging eyes—not the small, pinkish rat that had disappeared but sixty seconds previous, but a full grown rat, scarred and tailless as if from innumerable battles with other rats.

As the current clicked off Aaron Carruthers bent forward. Too late. The rat scurried from the laboratory with a squeal of alarm. Carruthers returned to his seat before the atomic machine and sat down. His face was worried. Dark thoughts stormed his reason. The rat he had placed within the atomic ray had aged nearly two years during the minute it was out of mortal sight. Two years!

He pulled a pad from his pocket and calculated the time that had elapsed since Professor Dahlgren had vanished from that same spot. Nearly forty hours. That would mean....

Nanette stirred in her chair. "What happened to the little rat, Aaron?"

Carruthers, busy making calculations, did not hear the question.

She turned to her brother. "Karl, what's the meaning of this? The second experiment didn't turn out like the first one. What became of that little rat?"

"I don't know what happened, Nan," spoke Karl. "Now don't bother me with your silly questions. You saw the same thing I did."

Carruthers raised his head and spoke quietly. "That rat you saw materialize under the atomic rays was the same rat you saw me place within the square."

"But it couldn't be," protested the girl.

"Nevertheless," shrugged Carruthers. "It was the same animal—only it had aged nearly two years during the brief time interval it was off from our planet."

"It's preposterous," cried the girl.

"Nothing is preposterous nowadays, Nanette."

"That's the woman of it," spoke Karl. "Always doubting."

"You boys are playing tricks on me," retorted the girl sharply. "I shouldn't have come to your old laboratory. Just because I'm a girl...."

"Don't," pleaded Carruthers, looking up from his pad of figures. "We're trying to solve the mystery underlying the forces which we have created." He replaced the test tube within the center of the square and returned to the atomic machine.

Through the twilight shadows of the room glowed the strange new ray. Faintly the generator hummed. Lights sparkled and twisted around the cathode in serpentine swirls.

"You needn't trouble to explain your silly experiment again," finished Nanette, rising abruptly to her feet. "I'm going home and dress for the New Year's party."

"Watch your switch like I asked you to," spoke Carruthers.

"Sit down," added Karl. "Don't put the rest of us in danger!"

"Oh-h-h!" gasped the girl as she inadvertently stepped squarely into the atomic ray of amber-colored light.

Carruthers leaped impatiently to his feet. An inarticulate cry of horror froze upon his lips. Forgetful that he himself was directly in line of the atomic ray he lunged forward, his mind centering on a single act—to drag the protesting and now thoroughly frightened girl out of the path of the penetrating ray.

But even as he started forward Nanette tripped over the glass railing around the square. Carruthers moved quickly. Yet his movements were slow and ungainly as compared to the speed of the light ray. He saw the figure of Nanette decrease in size before his eyes, heard the muffled expression of alarm and fear in Danzig's voice; then the room suddenly began to extend itself upward with the speed of a meteor.

What once had been walls and bare furniture resolved themselves into a range of hills, then mountains. The twilight gloom of the room became a dark void of

empty space that seemed to rush past his ears like a moaning wind.

He had the sensation of falling through infinite space as if he had been propelled from the world and hurled out into the vastness of interplanetary space.

Something brushed against him—something soft and fluttering. He grasped it like a drowning man would clutch a straw. "Nanette!"

The name echoed and re-echoed through his mind yet never seemed to get beyond his tightly clenched lips.

He felt something cool close over his hand.

Instinctively he grasped it. Her hand. Together they clung to each other as they felt themselves being hurled through endless space.

The twilight changed swiftly to black night that rushed past the two clinging figures and enveloped them in a wall of silence. Then out of the mysterious fastness came the dull glow of what looked like a distant planet. It grew and enlarged till it reached the size of a silver dollar. Little pin-points of light soon

began to appear on all sides of it, very much like stars.

Carruthers attempted to reassure Nanette that all was well, and they were out on the streets of the great metropolis. But even as he wrenched his tightly locked lips apart he saw that the shining disc far out into space was not what he had first thought it was—the earth's moon.

He shook his head to clear it of the perplexing cobwebs. What was the matter with his mind? He couldn't think or reason. All he knew was that he had erred. This strange planet looming in the sky held nothing familiar in markings nor in respect to its relations to the stars beyond it.

While yet he groped in the darkness for something tangible, his mind reverted to the girl at his side. She was clinging to him like a frightened child. He could feel the pressure of her body against his and it thrilled him immeasurably. No longer was he the cold, calculating young man of science.

How long they remained in state of suspension while strange worlds and planets flashed into a new sky before their startled eyes, Aaron Carruthers didn't know. At times it seemed like hours, years, ages. And when he thought of the tender nearness of the girl he held so tightly within his arms, it seemed like a few minutes.

Gradually the sensation of speed and space falling began to wear off, as if they were nearing earth or some solid substance once more. The air about them grew heavier. Then all movement through space ceased.

Carruthers was surprised to find what felt like earth beneath his feet. For long minutes he stood there, unmoving, still holding possessively to the girl.

"Aaron!" The name came out of the void like a faint caress.

"Nanette."



Reassured of each other's presence they stood perfectly still, lost in the vast silence of their isolation.

Presently the girl spoke. "Oh, Aaron, I'm frightened!"

"There's nothing to be alarmed at, dearest." The endearing term came for the first time from the man's lips. As long as he had known Nanette Danzig, love had never been mentioned between them. If it had ever existed, the feeling had not been expressed.

"You shouldn't call me that, Aaron."

His voice sounded curiously far-off when he answered. "I couldn't help it, Nan. Our nearness, the strange darkness, and the fact that we are alone together brought strange emotions to my heart. At this moment you are the dearest—"

Bump, thump! Bump, thump!

"What's that noise?" breathed Nanette.

Carruthers turned his head to listen. To his ears came the pound of some heavy object striking the ground at well-regulated intervals.

Nanette, who had started to free herself from Carruthers violent embrace, suddenly ceased to struggle. "Oh, what is it? What is it?" she whispered fearfully.

Carruthers sniffed the night air. A musky odor assailed his nostrils, strange and unfamiliar. "It's beyond me, Nanette. Let's move away from this spot. Perhaps we can find shelter for the rest of the night."

But the Stygian blackness successfully hid any form of shelter. Tired from their search they sat down.

"We might build a fire," suggested Carruthers, "only there doesn't seem to be any wood around. Nothing but bare rock."

"Perhaps it's just as well," spoke the girl. "The flames might attract prowlers."

"Maybe you're right," agreed Carruthers.

A silence fell between them. After a long time Nanette spoke.

"I don't suppose, Aaron, that anything I can do or say will help matters any. I know that our being where we are is my own fault. I'm sorry. Truly I am."

"The harm is done," said Carruthers. "Don't say anything more about it."

Nanette pointed at the disc of light shining high in the heavens. "These stars are as strange to me, Aaron, as if I had never seen them before. Saturn is the evening star at this time of year. It isn't visible. Even the familiar craters and mountains of the moon look different. And it glows strangely."

"I'd rather not talk about it, Nan."

Nanette placed a hand upon his arm. "I'm not a child, Aaron. I'm a grown woman. Fear comes through not knowing. Tell me the truth."

"Let's sit down."

They sat upon the ground and both stared out at the night heavens that arched into infinity above them. Presently Carruthers took the girl's hand from his arm and held it gently between his own. "You've guessed rightly, Nan. The orb shining upon us is not our moon. I'll try and make it clear."

The girl smiled reassuringly in the darkness. "I'm waiting."

"Strange as it must seem," began Carruthers, "you and I are still within the room of my laboratory. But we might as well be a million miles away for all the good it does us. Karl sits in his chair in the same position as when we disappeared in the violet glow of the atomic ray. His eyes are bulging with fear and horror. For days and days he'll continue to sit on that chair, his mind not yet attuned to what actually took place. What has happened? He doesn't know yet, Nan."

"Oh, it's incredible," sobbed Nanette.

"I know, but it's so obviously true that I won't even trouble to check my calculations." He pointed at the silver disc hanging low in the strange sky. "That, Nan, is not our moon. It is nothing more than a planetary electron very much like the one we are on at the present moment. The firmament is filled with them. From where we sit we can see but the half nearest to us. The glowing portion is illuminated from distant light rays shot off from the nucleus of the atom itself. That atom is going to be our light and heat for weeks, months, perhaps years to come. We're prisoners on an electron, and as such we are destined to rush through infinite space for the remainder of our lives unless...."

"Unless what?"

Aaron Carruthers hesitated for a bare fraction of a second. "Karl!" he whispered. "Our lives depend on him. Time flies fast for us, Nan. Already it is growing light. But not on our earth. Karl still sits upon his chair staring incredulously at the miracle of our disappearing bodies. It will take weeks of time, as it affects us, for the initial shock to travel along his nerves to the center of his brain."

His voice shook with emotion quite contrary to his usual calm nature. "Oh, I know it's hard to understand, Nan. I was a fool to meddle with laws of which I know so little compared to what there is yet to know."

"Then it's all true, Aaron. The little rat that came out from under the ray as an old rat was one and the same animal."

Carruthers nodded. "Time has changed in proportion to our size. We're moving so much faster than the earth that we must of necessity be bound to the universe of which we are now an integral part."

For a long time they remained silent, each immersed in dark, troubled thoughts. Nanette broke the silence.

"You don't suppose, Aaron, by any chance that Professor Dahlgren is still alive and on our planet?"

Carruthers shook his head negatively. "It's beyond human reason, Nan. He was lost in the ray for over forty hours. Translated into minutes he's been gone

twenty-four hundred minutes. Since the mouse we placed within the light ray aged approximately two years in the space of one minute, Professor Dahlgren would, if he were alive, be about four thousand, eight hundred years old."

Nanette rose abruptly to her feet. "Oh bother the figures. My head's swimming with them. It's getting light now, and I'm hungry."

"Eat one of your food tablets," suggested Carruthers.

"Please don't get funny," said Nanette. "Karl has them in his coat pocket."

"Hum-m-m!" coughed Carruthers, following her example by rising to his feet. "Looks as though we'd have to rustle our food. I've got nothing on my person but a knife, a pencil, a fountain pen and some pieces of paper. Nothing very promising in any of them."

At that moment the sky became fused with reddish light. Over the horizon appeared a shining orb. Far-away hills and valleys leaped into sight. Then for the

first time Carruthers noted the high plateau upon which he had spent the night. Had they ventured a hundred yards farther during the night they would have plunged into the rocky floor of a canyon a thousand feet below.

"Let's see if we can find a way down to the valley," he suggested. "If we get anything to eat it will have to come from trees. This plateau is barren of any form of vegetable matter."

They found a winding descent leading downward. It looked like a path that had been worn by the passage of many feet.

"Someone's been here before us," he exclaimed. "The ground is too well worn to be accidental."

"Look! Look!" pointed Nanette. Her face had become pale from the excitement of her discovery. "What is it, Aaron?"

Carruthers bent forward to examine the strange footprint. It was nearly two feet across and divided in



the center, as if the animal that made it had but two toes.

"From the size of the tracks and the length of the animal's stride, I should say it was some form of an amphibious dinosaur long extinct in our own world."

"Are they dangerous?"

"It all depends upon the species. Some of them are pure vegetarians; others are carnivorous. The heavy tramping we heard during the night evidently came from the beast who left these footprints."

They had come upon the footprints where the path made a turn, leading into a dense growth of trees and underbrush. And as Carruthers knelt beside the path he heard a rustle as of something moving directly behind him. Wonderingly, he turned his head to trace the disturbance. But the woods seemed empty.

"Strange," he murmured. "Did you hear something moving in back of us, Nan?"

Nan shook her head. "You don't think we're in any danger from these beasts, do you?"

Carruthers said nothing for the moment. Instead, he looked sharply in all directions and saw nothing.

"Let's push on till we come to some kind of a shelter. Perhaps we'll find people much like ourselves."

Down the path they hurried, glancing curiously right and left at unknown flowers and trees. A bird with brilliant feathers skimmed above their heads, uttering shrill cries. Other voices from the birds and animals in the woods took up the cry. The woods grew denser as they pushed into the unknown.

In the woods at their right a rodent squeaked as some larger animal pounced upon it. Presently they came to a pool of water roughly seventy feet across. While they knelt to quench their thirst they saw two young deer eyeing them from the far side. Soft feet pattered behind the kneeling couple. Carruthers half whirled as he rose to his feet and peered into the jungle behind him.

A blur of reddish brown vanished behind a tree. Man or animal Carruthers couldn't determine. He grasped Nanette by the arm and pulled her back to the path.

"Quick!" he whispered. "There's someone or something following us. I'm sure of it now."

Nanette's voice trembled slightly. "What is it, Aaron?"

"I don't know." He turned his head again. This time he saw the thing that was following. A low ejaculation of alarm escaped his lips. A gigantic ape! The mouth of the creature sagged grotesquely, revealing two rows of yellow fangs. And its orange colored eyes were burning coals set close together. Carruthers sucked in a deep breath.

"Run, Nan," he gritted. "I'll try and scare him away."

Simultaneously with the scream of fright from the startled girl, a huge mountain of grayish flesh and bones blocked the downward slope of the path. Carruthers paled as he turned and faced the new menace.

Coming directly toward them he saw an immense animal so great in size that it seemed to shut out the light. A prehistoric dinosaur! It came slowly and leisurely, swinging its great red mouth from side to side. Other denizens in the woods, sensing the presence of the huge killer, fled in a panic of alarm. Their shrill cries increased the terror that froze the hearts of the two earth people.

Nanette clung to her companion in abject terror, unable to move. Her fear stricken eyes were wild and staring as the mountain of flesh pushed towards them.

The animal's long neck arched far in front of its body, and its long, pointed tail remained out of sight within the trees.

Carruthers backed off the path into the underbrush, dragging the girl after him. The jaws of the huge animal opened wide with anticipation. Lumberingly he turned from the path and followed. Trees crashed before its gigantic bulk. The woods became a bedlam of snapping branches.

The horrified scream of the girl ended in a gurgling sigh. She toppled to the ground in a dead faint. Carruthers flung himself beside her crumpled body and gathered it into his arms. A quick glance he threw at the spot where he had last seen the gigantic ape. The animal was no longer there. It had disappeared.

The man's lips became a hard, straight line. Even as he straightened to his feet the leaves and branches of an overturned tree whipped his face. The red mouthed dinosaur was perilously near. So close that Carruthers could smell its great, glistening body. The odor was musky and foul.

Stumbling blindly he attempted to widen the distance between himself and his pursuer. But the hungry dinosaur pounded steadily on its course. There was no getting away from it. Its beady eyes sought out its prey and its keen smell told it exactly where the earth beings were.

On and on staggered Carruthers. The extra burden of the girl hampered his movements. Unseen roots

tripped him time and time again. Each time he scrambled to his feet and picked up the unconscious girl. Briars tore at his clothing and stung his hands.

The underbrush was thickening. A warm, dank smell clung to the vegetation now almost tropical in nature. Beads of sweat rolled down the man's forehead and into his eyes. But the horrible fear of those red, dripping jaws spurred him to renewed efforts.

He doubled to the left, hoping to throw the animal off his tracks. The undergrowth seemed to thin out at this point. Renewed hope flowed through the young scientist's blood. He stumbled on blindly, scarce watching where his feet were taking him. A sigh of relief came to his lips. Ahead of him he saw a clearing. His stride lengthened and he broke into a shambling run.

Then it was he saw, towering walls rising up on both sides of him—steep walls that he could never scale, even if alone. He tried to change his course, but the huge bulk of the pursuing dinosaur effectively

blocked his path. There was no alternative but to push on and pray for an opening in the rugged cliffs.

Abruptly a sigh of despair escaped his lips. The walls of the canyon narrowed suddenly, and across it stretched a wall of bare rock. He realized too late that he had returned to the base of the plateau where he had spent the night. The grim, towering walls hemmed him in completely from three sides. At the fourth side bulked the dinosaur, coming slowly, ponderously.

Beady eyes peered down cunningly at the helpless man and woman. Confident now that its prey couldn't escape, it extended its huge bulk across the narrow canyon for a leisurely killing.

Carruthers glared at the monster with fear-distended eyes. In his heart he realized that there was no escape. He had no means of defense, no way to combat the huge monster but flight. And even that was now denied him.

Closer and closer inched the killer until its great, red mouth appeared like the fire box of a huge boiler. Hot breath fanned the man's cheek. The nauseous odor of the beast made his stomach wrench. He dropped to his knees close to the inert figure of the girl and glared vengefully into the beady eyes.

The gaping mouth at the end of a long, supple neck jerked forward. Carruthers dragged the girl away just in time to escape the gnashing teeth. The dinosaur stamped angrily.

Once again Carruthers felt its hot breath beating upon his face. He cringed at the thought of this kind of death. No one would ever know how it happened. Not even his closest friend, Karl Danzig! What a mess things were. Why didn't the red mouth of the mighty dinosaur close over him and crush out life? Why must he kneel in torture?

From near at hand a piercing scream rang through the air. A harsh scream. A terrifying scream!



Carruthers raised his head. The dinosaur had twisted around to glare hatefully at the disturber of its meal. Other screams splintered the forest air. And as the kneeling man watched he saw the great red ape who had been dodging his footsteps a short time before, slouch between the dinosaur's hulking body and the wall of the cliff. Behind it came others—black mammals with curving arms that dragged along the ground.

Their fangs were bared. They were in an ugly mood. Arriving in front of the dinosaur and less than four feet from the earth man and woman, the leader silenced its followers with a low growl and turned in concentrated fury upon the dinosaur. Its long arms drummed a throbbing tattoo upon its hairy chest.

The dinosaur bellowed protestingly against the attitude of the apes and gorillas. The ape leader protested with equal violence. The dinosaur shifted uneasily, wagging its heavy head from side to side. On all sides came deep growls from the mammals.

Carruthers watched all this display torn between doubt and fear. Which side would win? How could the apes and gorillas, huge as they were, hope to force the dinosaur away? But the apes were masters. This much was apparent. Inch by inch the dinosaur backed away, glaring vengefully. And having reached a spot where it could turn around it did so. Presently the ground trembled as it made off through the steaming jungle. The leader of the mammals turned and faced the earth people. Long, searching minutes passed. Its close set eyes seemed to be studying them.

Nanette stirred and opened her eyes. The sight of the anthropoids caused her to recoil.

"Steady, Nan," spoke Carruthers softly.

Other apes and gorillas gathered around the giant red animal. They displayed no hostility, only an intense interest. One by one they squatted before the earth people until they formed a half circle, reaching from the one wall of the rocky plateau to the other.

While they sat there it began to grow dark.

Carruthers removed his watch and ventured a glance at it. Daylight had lasted less than three hours. An hour for twilight, then it would be dark. Evidently the cycle around the nucleus of the atom took approximately ten hours.

Nanette sat up. "Aaron!"

He answered without removing his eyes from the red ape less than four feet away. "Don't look at me, Nan. Concentrate on the big, red fellow. He's evidently in control. If we act the least bit frightened they might decide to destroy us."

"What are they waiting for? Why don't they go away?"

"We'll know before long. I imagine they're trying to figure out who we are and what we are doing on their tiny planet."

Darkness descended rapidly. Overhead, a small moon rose majestically in the heavens and started its journey through the night. Its faint light revealed the

fact that the apes showed no intentions of leaving. They still squatted before the earth people, in a half circle of staring brown eyes.

Whatever fear Carruthers had felt towards the animals died away. "They're harmless," he told Nanette. "Get some sleep if you can."

Long after the tired girl had drifted into slumber Carruthers sat with his back against the wall, mentally trying to figure the whole thing out. The dinosaur was real enough. Yet the apemen had frightened it away, in fact had compelled it to go without actually engaging in combat. No question about it. The anthropoids were in control. But who controlled them?

Quite suddenly his eyes snapped open. Daylight had come again. He must have fallen asleep. The shrill chatter of the apeman came to his ears. The red ape leader shuffled to his feet and looked from the earth people to the spot in the jungle whence came the chatter. Abruptly he opened his mouth and emitted a flood of gibberish sounds.

The gorillas and apes at his side flattened their bodies against the rocky walls in attitudes of expectant waiting.

"What's happening?" gasped the girl.

"There's no telling," whispered Aaron. "It must be someone or something of importance. Note the expressions of awe and reverence on the faces of the apemen. My God, Nanette, look!"

Out of the depths of the jungle emerged seven white beings—human or animal it was impossible to tell. They were huge creatures with the bodies of men. Erect of carriage, almost human in looks, they contrasted strangely with the red apes and the black gorillas. Six of them appeared to act as bodyguard for the seventh.

As they reached the space in front of the two earth people, the bodyguard stepped aside. The seventh white one came to a dead stop. Long and intently he stared at the man and girl crouched against the wall. And the scrutiny seemed to please him, for he smiled.

Carruthers eyed the figure uneasily. He saw what seemed to be a man dressed in a long, fibrous garment. With white hair and beard, it was a strange figure indeed for an apeman. He saw also that the eyes were well spaced, a mark of intelligence. The forehead was high and broad. And as Carruthers mentally studied the creature, strange and bizarre thoughts crossed his mind.

The mouth of the white apeman twitched as if he were going to speak. The heavy lips parted. A single word came to Carruthers' ear—"Man?"

Carruthers nodded. "We are from the earth."

The lips of the apeman moved painfully as if speech came with the utmost of difficulty. "The prophecy of the Great One has been fulfilled even as it has been written."

The red apes and black gorillas allowed their eyes to wander from their white leader to the two earth people. And their faces reflected the supernatural awe with which they regarded the earth people.

"It's uncanny that an animal can speak our language," breathed Nanette.

As if he hadn't heard her, Carruthers spoke again.

"We are from the earth," he repeated. "We have been on your world many hours, and we are both hungry and thirsty."

"Words come hard," came from the lips of the white bearded one. "I have not used them for years."

"And who are you?" asked Carruthers.

The white bearded one paused as if to recall some distant echo from the past. "I am the last of the tribe of Esau. But come! This is no place for speech. Long have I and my followers waited for this hour."

Without another word he swung around. The six guards enclosed his aged body in a hollow square and the procession moved away. They came after a short journey to a natural opening leading to the heart of the plateau. The apes and gorillas, with the exception of the red leader, remained outside. The remainder of

the party pushed through a tortuous tunnel until they reached a cavernous opening directly beneath the plateau. Vertical openings in the walls furnished light and air. The white chieftain spoke in a strange tongue to his followers, and they instantly prepared three couches in a far corner of the cavern.

As the earth people seated themselves on the skins that made up the couch they were both conscious of a far-away rumbling like peals of thunder. Not having seen any signs of a storm outside Carruthers turned inquiringly on the aged chieftain.

The old man's eyes were shadowed with grim foreboding. "I have ordered something to refresh you and your companion," he said. "Eat first, my friends. We will talk later."

The six body-guards left the main cavern. Presently they returned with large trays made of fanlike leaves resembling the palmetto. Fresh fruits and uncooked vegetables formed the bulk of the meal. In silence they ate. After the litter had been cleared away the



guards withdrew with the exception of the giant red ape, who crouched near the opening to the tunnel.

"I am glad you have come," began the old chieftain, "but sorry, too. Our planet, or rather the higher forms of life upon it, are doomed."

Again there came to the ears of the earth people that far-off beat of sound that seemed to shake the ground. They looked to the white bearded leader for explanation.

"Ah, you hear it too," murmured the other. "For centuries, we of the great tribe of Esau have fought for the supremacy of our little world—ever since the Great One appeared in our midst and instructed us in world knowledge."

"And this Great One, as you call him," spoke Carruthers. "Who was he?"

"He was from your world. I never saw him. He comes to me as a legend. For years he toiled among us, teaching and instructing until we mastered his

language. He called himself Dahlgren. Later he ruled all the tribes. We of the Esau line he made into leaders because of our higher intelligence. The tribes of Zaku were trained for war. Perhaps you have noticed the chief of all the Zakus. He is crouching now beside the entrance to our inner walls. He is Marbo, and his followers live in the jungles."

"And does he talk as you do?"

The white chieftain shook his head. "No. Only we of the Esau tribe have mastered speech. Not counting the women of our tribe that comprise our numbers we are only seven in all."

"I owe Marbo my life as does also my companion," said Carruthers.

"Marbo looks upon you earth people as gods," spoke the old chieftain. "He and his followers will protect you with their lives."

"And who rules over and beyond?" questioned Carruthers, waving his arm to cover the remaining portion of the electron.

"There is no rule beyond except that of force. The Great One called them by name, Morosaurus, Diplodocus, the Horned Ceratosaurus, and many others whose names I have long forgotten. They are our enemies whom we cannot destroy. And their numbers increase from year to year and are slowly backing us upon our last stronghold."

"Isn't there anything we can do?" asked Carruthers, feeling a quiver of apprehension along his spine.

Slowly, the old chieftain shook his head. "Nothing whatever. Marbo and his followers can control one or two, but when the herds begin to push on into our territory, we are doomed. Even now their rumblings and bellowings come through the jungles. Their thirst and hunger for flesh is enormous."

Carruthers turned upon the girl. "The old chief's words explain everything, Nan. Professor Dahlgren

has been here and gone. He lived a lifetime in the span of a few hours earth-time. Now it looks as if we were destined to follow in his footsteps."

"I'm not afraid," said the girl. "Nothing can be worse than what we have already passed through." And her eyes softened as she placed her small hands within those of Carruthers. "We have each other, Aaron."

He smiled reassuringly and turned to the old chieftain. "I am Carruthers, a friend and assistant to Dahlgren. The girl here is Nanette."

The chieftain smiled gravely. "And I am Zark. Welcome to my kingdom, Carruthers and Nanette. We need you here. Now tell me of your world, for long have I waited for a follower of the great Dahlgren to appear before my people."

Throughout the remainder of the day Carruthers talked. The shafts of light paled at the end of the short day. Night came, bringing with it a sense of security against the increasing hordes that thundered and trumpeted beyond the borders of the jungle.

In the morning Zark instructed Marbo to remain close to Carruthers at all times. So the young scientist left the cavern and ascended the path leading to the top of the plateau. He looked at his watch and compared the second hand with the nucleus atom sailing across the heavens to estimate its speed.

Days passed as he made his observations. Meanwhile he had searched and found the exact spot wherein he and Nanette had first stepped foot onto the electron. This spot he carefully marked off with a ring of huge boulders carried up by the followers of Marbo. Then he began to calculate upon his pad. There must be no mistakes. He and Nanette must be within the magic circle at the estimated time.

Between times he helped Nanette construct their living quarters in the cavern. Zark had furnished them with skins and furs with which to cover the walls. Carruthers made a fireplace of stones and restored the lost art of fire to Zark, Marbo and their followers.

Days slipped by like minutes. Short days filled with excursions into the jungles. Carruthers' face soon bristled with a stubble of beard. This lengthened with time. Sharp thorns tore their clothes to ribbons. Nanette, womanlike, cried many times during the nights because of the lack of a mirror and a comb for her untidy hair.

But other and more important events soon claimed the attention of the earth people. Day by day the herds of dinosaurs and other monsters of like breed edged closer and closer to the tiny civilization around the plateau. It worried Carruthers so much that he sought out Zark and had him bring the other six members of his tribe together for a council of war.

"A complete defensive system, Zark," he told them. "We must make a fortress of the plateau and fill the caverns with food."

Zark shook his head. "No. It is quite useless. Followers of Marbo have recently returned from over the beyond and report strange things. I have hesitated to speak of them for fear of alarming you.

Our planet is breaking up. Violent eruptions have caused fires of stone and mud. The rumblings you have heard were not made entirely by our enemies. They came from the ground.

"An earthquake," murmured Carruthers, momentarily stunned by the news. "But they are always of short duration, Zark. We have them on our own planet."

"Ah, but these are different. They cover the whole of our globe. The great Dahlgren noted them while he was with us. He wrote many words and figures on paper concerning them. Only yesterday I unearthed these records. The life of our planet was doomed to destruction during the present year. What matter if the herds of dinosaurs overrun us and destroy lives? In the end they, too, will be destroyed. It is fate. We can do nothing."

Even as the old chieftain spoke a gigantic rumbling, greater in intensity than any heretofore, shook the electron. Above the deep rolling disturbance underground rose the shrill cries of the apemen.

Carruthers leaped to his feet and raced through the tunnel. A herd of dinosaurs choked the path leading to the outside entrance. Marbo brushed past him, shrilling in great excitement.

"Drive them away!" ordered Carruthers. "Like this!" He hurled a rock at the eye of the nearest animal.

The dinosaur bellowed and backed away. The apes, and gorillas, used to fighting only with their long arms, caught on to the stunt with surprising quickness. Their powerful arms reached out. Stones and boulders began to hurtle from the mouth of the tunnel. They thudded against the heads of the great monsters like hailstones.

Subdued and frightened by this sudden display of force, the monsters withdrew down the path. But the apemen had discovered a new method of warfare. They found a childish delight in hurling stones. Within a few minutes the slope was barren of rocks. The animals followed up their momentary advantage and ran screaming down the path. The dinosaurs fled in panic.



As soon as the enemy had been driven away, Carruthers pointed out to Marbo the advantage of gathering the stones up from the ground and returning them to the space around the mouth of the tunnel so that he and his followers would be ready for a second repulse.

Zark appeared at this moment and helped with the explanation. His crafty old eyes turned with new respect upon the earthman.

Carruthers toiled with them every day from then on, building and fortifying the plateau against further incursions of the monsters. Security and peace reigned for several weeks then hostilities broke out afresh.

The rumblings of the electron had increased with each passing week. Volcanic eruptions poured fresh discharges of molten lava and fiery sparks along the edges of the jungles.

"I don't want to needlessly alarm you, Nan," he told her that night, "but the fires have started. Zark was

right. Unless we have rain before to-morrow morning the heat and smoke will drive us out into the open."

"But we can go to the top of the plateau," suggested the girl. "There aren't any trees—"

A concentrated bellowing cut off the rest of her words. Driven towards higher ground by the heat of the flames, the dinosaurs were trampling up the path leading to the tunnel.

Once again Carruthers rallied his army of apemen around him and attempted to drive the mammals away. As they reached the end of the tunnel a cloud of dense smoke stung their eyes. The apemen shrilled in a sudden panic and forgot all their previous training in driving off the dinosaurs. Like scurrying rats they scattered.

Flames from the conflagration broke through the smoke—flames that leaped and twisted skyward.

Carruthers flung off the fear that held him spellbound and started along up the path leading to the top of the

plateau. A disheveled figure appeared suddenly at his side—Nanette!

"Come," he whispered, hoarsely. "We've got to get out of this or we'll choke to death."

"But Zark," breathed the girl, "He and his followers are still in the cavern. We can't leave them."

Like one demented of reason, Carruthers raced back along the tunnel to the cavern. "Zark!" he shouted.

The sound of his voice was drowned in the welter of screaming bedlam coming up from below as the dinosaurs and apes fought for the supremacy of life. But of Zark and his six followers he found absolutely no sign. Quickly he hurried back to where he had left Nanette.

Even as he reached the spot he had a sudden premonition of danger. A gorilla, huge and black, brushed past him on the path, carrying a limp burden under his shaggy arm.

"Stop!" commanded Carruthers, hurrying after the animal.

A huge arm knocked him sprawling. Spitting blood Carruthers staggered to his feet. Up to this time he had felt no fear of the gorillas. They had been orderly and well behaved. Fearful that harm would come to the girl he ran after the dark figure ahead. The red glow of flames swept nearer. The gorilla came to a stop and faced its pursuer. Lust shone from its close-set eyes—lust and passion.

Carruthers stopped dead in his tracks. "Drop her!" he demanded.

The animal snarled hoarsely. There came the sound of ripping cloth. Nanette screamed—a terrifying scream that echoed and re-echoed through the electron night.

It was then that the thin cloak of civilization dropped from Aaron Carruthers' back. He became in a single moment an animal fighting for his mate. With a snarl equally vicious as that of the gorilla pawing at the helpless girl, he lunged forward.

Mouthing his rage, the gorilla flung the earth man to the ground. Carruthers came up frothing at the mouth. With grim intensity he fastened himself to the animal's free arm. The raging mammal staggered helplessly under the extra burden and dropped the girl to concentrate his fury on the man. It raised a hairy arm aloft for the smashing blow. Instinctively Carruthers released his hold.

At that very moment the electron lurched sickeningly, causing them both to lose their footing. The violent upheaval sent Carruthers one way and the gorilla the other. While the man stumbled to his feet to resume battle he saw the infuriated monster stagger over the edge of the plateau wall into a sheer drop of a thousand feet.

Starkly through the night came the growling roars of the giant beasts from the jungles below. Nanette fluttered to his side. Her dress was torn and dragged on the ground. For all her disheveled appearance she was still beautiful to look upon. Forgetful of the danger on all sides of him, the animal in Carruthers

saw in her pitifully half-clad body the same thing that the beast had desired. His head whirled hotly.

"Aaron!" she pleaded as his arm reached out to clutch her.

Hungrily he drew her to him. The pale light of the electron moon mingled with the roaring blast of the flames. Madness inflamed his heart and pounded his blood.

"Don't, Aaron," protested the girl, trying to free herself.

Something in the quality of the girl's frightened tones brought the man back to normal. He fought against the overwhelming desire to possess with all the force of his nature. And the better half triumphed. No longer was he an animal, but a reasoning human being. With a faint sigh he released her and wiped a hand across his dripping forehead.

"I'm sorry, Nan," he murmured. "That great brute drove me mad for an instant. I'm all right now."

Together they stood in the electron night and watched death creep closer and closer. The plateau was entirely surrounded with flames now and the heat was increasing with each passing moment. As it increased they backed towards the center.

From under their feet came the choking cries of the apemen. They had returned to the cavern only to be overcome by smoke fumes. While yet the earth people stood there waiting and watching the red death creep nearer, the path leading downward into the jungle became a mass of moving shadows.

"The dinosaurs!" cried Nanette. "Oh, Aaron! We are lost!"

"Steady, girl," soothed the man. "If we stand still they might not see us in the dark. The smoke will destroy our scent."

But as the minutes passed the herd of monsters increased. They crowded along the path and spread out over the top of the plateau. Once again the smell

of their glistening bodies fouled the nostrils of the earth people.

Slowly Carruthers guided Nanette back towards the ring of rocks—perhaps the barrier would serve to keep the animals away. He scrambled across one of the boulders and pulled the girl after him. As he did so, a violent subterranean action shook the electron from one end to the other.

Carruthers braced his feet against the ring of rocks to keep from pitching headlong to the ground. Nanette clung to him wordlessly. All around them the giant forces of nature raged sullenly. Twisting seams appeared in the rocky floor of the plateau from which oozed gaseous vapors.

"Courage," soothed Carruthers as he held the quivering body of the frightened girl close to his own. "This can't last."

But the ground continued to lurch and heave on its axis. Vivid lights crossed and criss-crossed the atomic heavens. The fissures in the ground appeared now as



black canals. The lower part of the circle of boulders disappeared. Off to the right came despairing screams. White bodies glowed for an instant against the background of flames.

"Zark!" shouted Carruthers, as he saw the leader of the tribe of Esau and his followers making their way along the plateau top.

Zark must have heard the earth-man's voice, for he started forward at a run. Simultaneously there appeared a herd of the greatest of all the prehistoric monsters—the Brontosaurus. They balked enormously against the flame-licked skies. Zark and his followers attempted to avoid them. But fear of the scorching flames drove the monsters forward. There followed a maddening moment of unutterable pain for the remaining ones of the tribe of Esau, then the herd trampled them underfoot and rumbled towards the half circle of rocks where the two earth people were crouched.

The leader of the Brontosaurus herd trumpeted madly and barged for the higher ground of safety. Too late

did instinct warn it of the widening fissure underfoot. Before it could stop the pressure of the herd drove it into the crevice.

Carruthers drew back to the extreme inside edge of the boulders trying to still his ears against their insane bellowings. A cloud of heavy, choking smoke enveloped him for a moment then passed away. Then it was that he saw a new star in the atomic heavens,—a star that seemed to burn with the brilliance of a meteor. Even as he watched he was conscious of it drawing closer.

The planet was now in a continuous uproar. The ground was heaving and trembling as if from some inward strain. This was the end. Carruthers realized it with a sinking heart. In another minute the electron would disintegrate into a flaming mass of matter and fling itself from its orbit around the atom.

And then the light from the approaching star struck them in a blinding radiance of vermilion flames. Carruthers held his breath. Some invisible force seemed to take possession of his body and that of the

girl at his side. The rocky plateau, now a boiling mass of rocks, dropped from under their feet. Clear, cold air enveloped their bodies. Then with the speed of light their bodies were hurled through planetary space, up, up, up into the vast reaches of the higher ether.

Darkness assailed them. The flames from the jungle fire vanished into nothingness. The electron moon paled to the size of a pin point, then went out.

Carruthers had the feeling of expansion and growth. It was as if his body was taking on the size of the whole world. It seemed to last for hours, days, ages. But all the while he clung fast to the slender, quivering body of Nanette.

Mountains and hills suddenly blazed before his eyes. Straight up and down mountains. He tried to stir his sluggish mind into action. What did they mean? Where had he seen them before? And while yet his mind struggled with the problem the mountains dwindled like melting snow. The pressure around his

body relaxed. A blinding glare of steady light played upon his face. Then all was quietness and peace.

"Nan! Aaron!" The voice was Karl's.

Dazedly they looked around. What had once been mountains were now desks and chairs. They were back again in the laboratory. Several agonizing minutes passed before either could grasp the startling change in things. The horror of the electronic disaster still filled their minds to overflowing.

Carruthers recovered first. He stepped from the railed inclosure marking the spot where the atomic beam had restored them after their space flight, and guided the girl to a chair. Karl's face was drawn and white as his eyes rested on the two pitiful figures that had materialized out of the ether.

"Don't ask us any questions yet," spoke Carruthers in a tired voice. "We've passed through too many horrors. What was the matter, Karl? Couldn't you get the rays to work sooner?"

"Sooner?" Danzig's eyes were wide with wonder. He glanced at his watch. "It was a little difficult to control both machines all alone, but I switched off the ray from the inverse dimensional tubes and turned on the other immediately. All in all it must have taken me fifteen seconds."

"Fifteen seconds," repeated Carruthers, dazedly. "It's unbelievable." He dropped wearily into a chair and rested his forehead in the palms of his hands. "How long have we been gone, Nan?"

Nanette pulled the ragged remnants of a dress around her knees and attempted a smile. "Almost four months, according to the passage of time on the electron."

"Impossible!" whispered Danzig, shutting his eyes to the truth.

Aaron Carruthers pointed to his clothes, now ragged and torn. "Look, Karl! Everything I have on is worn out completely. Observe my hair and beard, and the soles of my shoes. Human reason to the contrary,

Nanette and I have lived like two animals for four months, and all in the space of fifteen seconds earth time. How can you account for it? We figured it out on paper. And we've proved it with our bodies. What it will mean to future civilization I can't foretell. It's beyond imagination."

And the laboratory became silent as a tomb as the three people tried with all the strength of their minds to grasp the miracle of the strange and unfathomable atomic rays.